foundations of morals, Percival received an introduction to moral philosophy similar to that given in Edinburgh and Glasgow. It was, however, a position closer to Taylor's that Percival would eventually adopt.

It is important to stress that, while the philosophical foundation issue continues to attract most interest from modern philosophical ethicists, it constituted only one part of eighteenth-century moral philosophy. As we have noted above, the theoretical part was, strictly speaking, distinct from and 'subservient to the practical part of this science', as Thomas Reid explained to his Glasgow students a few years after Percival's student days in Warrington.[35] Theories of the moral faculty were seen as highly abstract, infinitely disputed and generally as having little influence on moral practice. The specification of the duties in life or the rules of virtuous conduct, on the other hand, was an eminently practical discipline. Only when theoretical or speculative systems denied the very existence of a moral faculty did they have practical implications. Both in dissenting academies and in Scottish universities the theoretical part of moral philosophy was designed to refute such 'licentious' systems as those of Hobbes, Mandeville and Hume, though even in this regard the ideal of free inquiry assured such philosophers a wide student audience – at least as titillating moral bogeymen.

The distinction between the theory of the moral faculties and the explanation of the duties in life is of great importance in the present work because the medical ethics which is the main concern here, falls squarely within the latter field. Its importance can be further explained through its connection with a parallel distinction in theology. Many clergymen of the Enlightenment – Scots Presbyterian, Dissenting, and latitudinarian Anglican – argued for the relative simplicity of natural theology compared with the complicated systems of theologians. Just as the arguments of metaphysicians were far too subtle to become the foundation for a system of practical duties, so theology was far too complex and abstract to be used as a guide for religious belief. While the complexity in both cases might invite reference to authority, the controversiality that goes with complexity should, it was argued, rule out the entrenchment of authority, whether priestly, political or educational, in these areas of life. Each of us must form his or her own opinion concerning matters of faith, just as each person must reach a personal conclusion concerning right and wrong. Candour, as Price and Priestley taught, required no less.

While anti-authoritarian and in a sense individualistic, this line

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of thought was decidedly not anti-social. We are, in this view, at least equal both in our being individual and in the inescapability of our having to live together with each other's differences.

Just as the natural religious sense, uncontaminated by speculative theology, may give each person an adequate idea of his or her relationship with the Creator, so practical ethics as understood by any moral faculty – whatever its metaphysical status – sufficed to show us the duty of our social station. It is the knowledge of these duties that both the followers and antagonists of Hutcheson's system could agree upon and this was the primary lesson taught in the classes of both Seddon and Taylor.

John Aikin Sr, the other tutor to influence Percival at Warrington, was educated at Northampton Academy and at Gregory's *alma mater* King's College, Aberdeen, and he was, not surprisingly, a life-long friend of Thomas Reid.[36] After graduating from King's, he returned to Northampton to become assistant tutor to Philip Doddridge, one of the leading figures in the history of Dissenting education. During Percival's time in Warrington, Aikin was tutor in languages and *belles lettres*. He taught classes in French, grammar, oratory and criticism, logic and history. He also encouraged wide reading in his students, who became well versed in the Greek classics, and it was said that 'in reading the philosophical treatises of the ancients', Aikin 'enlarged so much as to render his lectures almost a second course, in a varied form, of natural religion and ethics'.[37]

Percival was Aikin's first pupil and if we are to judge Aikin's contribution by the character and style of his pupil's works, then he was indeed the most influential of Percival's teachers. An important example of this is Percival's original choice of *Medical Jurisprudence*[38] as the title of the work which later, on the advice of colleagues and friends, became *Medical Ethics*. In his preface, however, Percival defended his first choice. Some modern critics find both titles inappropriate, but this is a misjudgement, since Percival and his contemporaries defined their professional ethics in terms derived from a particular jurisprudential tradition, as we will see. For the moment, it should simply be noted that like his Scottish teachers, Aikin had an extensive acquaintance with natural jurisprudence and like them he lectured on the subject 'so far as it is derived from the same sources with the doctrines of Natural Religion and Private Morality'.[39] Indeed, as we have seen, these three doctrines, natural religion, private morality, and natural jurisprudence, made up practical ethics. They covered, respectively, man's duty to God, to

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himself and to others. Because professional ethics fell under the last category, 'duty to others', it was appropriate to designate it as a 'particular jurisprudence', namely, medical jurisprudence.

If the broad sweep of the Warrington curriculum reflected the variety of interests pursued by tutors such as John Aikin, it was to the influence of another polymath, Joseph Priestley, that it owed its contemporary reputation as the most scientific and innovative of the academies. Priestley later achieved a reputation as one of Britain's leading scientists, and many Warrington students maintained their ties with him. Like Percival, many were participants in and financial supporters of Priestley's various scientific schemes and, like Percival, they shared neither Priestley's theological views nor his radical politics.

Priestley began his career at Warrington as tutor in languages and *belles lettres*, and although he is chiefly remembered for his scientific and philosophic work, historians of British education have not overlooked his contribution to such areas of the humanities as English grammar and history. The new emphasis placed on the subject of history as an academic subject,[40] and the particular view which was taught at Warrington, indirectly, or so I shall argue, influenced the writing of professional ethics. Priestley's course is therefore also of interest in the present context.

One of Priestley's best-known works and the one which established his reputation as a natural scientist was his *History and Present State of Electricity*, written at Warrington and published in 1767. In the following years, however, he also developed a course of lectures on history for students at the Dissenting academies. These were later recommended at Cambridge and were, according to one contemporary critic, among 'the most able and useful works produced by its author; and indeed among the best and most satisfactory views of that subject which the age furnished'.[41] At Warrington, Priestley also gave a course on the sources, methods, and objects of history, and he had the Warrington Academy Press publish chronological and biographical charts which he adapted from the French for use by British students. This was considered a brilliant achievement for which he received a fellowship of the Royal Society.[42]

History and biography were intimately connected, as we shall see, and their common object was the study of human nature. The application of history and biography was the task of philosophers who alone 'faithfully, impartially, and upon an extensive scale' could make use of the material offered by these disciplines. The purpose of

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historical biography was thus not to confirm *a priori* moral or religious principles, but to provide the data for 'a calm and laborious investigation'.[43] This was, in the view of its practitioners, the Baconian ideal of scientific history and biography.

According to Priestley, the study of history had three functions which were, in ascending importance, 'to amuse the imagination' and 'interest the passions in general', to 'improve the understanding' and to 'strengthen the sentiments of virtue'.[44] The last indicates that the new 'scientific' history with its emphasis on causal analysis was meant to retain its traditional didactic role as exemplary literature. 'To men of all stations instructions for their conduct may be conveyed in the clearest most cogent manner through the example of others.'[45] He also believed that the study of history, in addition to being a cornerstone in common education, was essential in the formation of the character of statesmen and public officials.

There was nothing new in the intertwining of history and biography but, when put to the service of the Dissenting cause (and to the service of other Enlightenment causes elsewhere), it transformed the genre of biography. The 'new' biography should, as Priestley put it, comprise a 'tablet of merit' rather than a 'tablet of fame'. The underlying theme was the ideal of social ascent through talent and education, and it was enthusiastically embraced by the liberal anti-establishment. Because it was the lives of ordinary men (and occasionally women)[46] that were celebrated in this manner, the genre was, in effect, both a means for and a reflection of the changing self-image of intellectual and professional groups striving for public recognition.

The tone of the new biography is clearly conveyed in a programmatic statement by one of its best-known proponents, the younger Aikin:

> those characters in biography are most instructive and animating, in which we see persevering efforts overcoming a crowd of obstacles, and distinguished eminence rising out of moderate beginnings. This is, in fact, the discipline through which some of the greatest names among mankind have passed; and it may be asserted, that none of the original favourites of nature and fortune have attained a superiority so solid and durable, as that acquired by such a course of probation.[47]

Priestley and other Dissenters helped to collect and disseminate the biographical data which served as the basis for an extraordinary number of popular 'lives', eulogies, tributary records, funeral orations, memoirs and epitaphs which celebrated the literary and

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scientific achievements of his group. What is of particular interest here is that physicians were among the most energetic in this activity.[48] Hundreds of medical biographies changed hands thanks to the support and encouragement of Dissenting publishers such as Joseph Johnson;[49] they appeared in popular journals and reviews, largely controlled by liberal Dissenters, such as the *Monthly Review*, the *Monthly Magazine*, and the *Gentleman's Magazine*,[50] and they were channelled through an active network of medical societies in Britain, on the Continent and in America. Whether they were accounts of famous teachers such as Boerhaave or Cullen or of the honest toiler in a provincial backwater, each helped to promote the professional ideal associated with the new science of medicine. Like the medical ethics, the idealization of a particular medical education and a particular type of character served to unify the developing profession. Biography was the ideal medium for extolling the benefits of an education at Edinburgh, rather than Oxford and Cambridge, and for singing the praises of such exemplary characters as William Cullen, John Fothergill, John Howard and Sir John Pringle. Like medical ethics, medical biography identified and explicated a set of professional norms which could be transmitted and perpetuated. In Britain, as in France, medical biography was practised with particular fervour by those who were excluded from the grand citadel of the established medical profession, the Royal College of Physicians, and they were increasingly of the new self-conscious and sometimes exceedingly smug middle ranks. Most important, however, the new biography helped to establish the role of medicine and its developing institutions in the public, non-political sphere.

The best illustration of the project just outlined is to move from the subject of biography to the biographical subject or Percival himself. In the *Memoirs* of his father, Edward Percival charted the life of a medical 'man of merit'. Short on detail and psychological insight he was nevertheless true to the principles of biography taught by Priestley. Of particular interest is the great emphasis he placed on the public or social connections of intellect. Although the description of his father's medical education is disappointingly sketchy, his account of the opportunities derived from his association with the University of Edinburgh is given great weight. It is against this intricate web of friendship, collegiality and patronage stretching between Warrington and Edinburgh and back again to Manchester and Dissenting England that other developments of Percival's career must now be examined.

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Edinburgh and Manchester

In 1761, at the age of twenty-one, Percival like many Dissenters before him left his academy for Edinburgh to enrol at the famous school of medicine. He came well recommended by his Scottish-trained teachers and seemed to have slipped easily into the highest echelons of the city's literary and scientific life. He had, his son notes, 'the good fortune in particular to enjoy frequent and friendly intercourse with the rival candidates for historic fame, Mr. Hume and Dr Robertson'.[51] He came to appreciate that it was impossible to know David Hume 'without admiring his talents and loving him for the suavity of his manners'.[52] When he met Hume again in Paris where the latter was Secretary to the British Embassy, Percival noted 'that Hume alone was insensible to the artifices or the seductions of vanity'.[53] His acquaintance with Hume turned out to be both profitable and disconcerting. Under Hume's patronage the young physician was introduced to many of the leading philosophers of Paris: d'Alembert, Voltaire, Lavoisier, Maupertuis, Diderot, Pinel and other prominent intellectuals, including Mme Necker, wife of the Minister of Finance. According to Percival, Hume's social charms were unfortunately matched by the seductive logic of his critique of revealed religion. He told his son that reading Hume's *Essay on Miracles* had almost shattered his faith but that he had successfully averted tragedy by turning to Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, which remained for him, as for many of his contemporaries, a 'sheet anchor' in the sea of scepticism.[54]

Percival's relations with William Robertson were less dramatic but, as it turned out, more conducive to lasting friendship and those reciprocal favours that oiled the machinery of enlightenment. We are told, for example, that Percival enrolled Robertson in an international project, suggested by the finance minister of France, to form a compact among the maritime states of Europe for the abolition of the slave trade.[55] It was through Robertson, who was Principal of the University, that Joseph Priestley, on the suggestion of Percival, received an honorary doctorate from Edinburgh.[56]

While in Edinburgh, Percival was introduced to an influential patron of Warrington Academy, Lord Willoughby de Parham, then Vice-President of the Royal Society of London. Later, Willoughby proposed Percival's admission to a Fellowship of the Royal Society and, in 1765, he became, according to his son, the youngest member in the Society's history.[57] Percival's fellow students at Edinburgh became life-long friends and colleagues. Thomas

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Butterworth Bayley, a Lancaster magistrate, prison reformer and student of Adam Smith's philosophy, was his most intimate friend and John Haygarth of Chester a close medical colleague.[58] Other Edinburgh graduates with whom he associated and later co-operated in various public health schemes were William Falconer, John Aikin Jr, John Coakley Lettsom, William Currie, John Ferriar and Sir Lucas Pepys.[59] Most were either Dissenters or educated in Dissenting academies and all were well-known medical reformers and men of letters.

Percival did not stay to graduate in Edinburgh but left with several classmates to complete his medical degree in Leyden in 1765. He subsequently submitted a thesis at Leyden, entitled *De Frigore*, for which he received the degree of Doctor of Medicine. After a sojourn in Holland, Paris and then London, to walk the wards of the great hospitals, he returned to Warrington, married, and started a practice. In 1767 he moved to Manchester, set up a new practice and began to write what was to be a steady stream of popular and professional publications on medicine, literature, science, moral philosophy, and pedagogy. He was the founder, with various friends and colleagues, of several important Manchester institutions and played a central role in local political causes on behalf of Dissenters and other groups.

Retrospective accounts of Percival's extra-medical career usually highlight his role in the foundation of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. This began as an informal gathering at Percival's home and was formally instituted in 1781, with Percival serving as its president for twenty-one years. The Society, which still exists, had a great many similarities with the societies in Scottish university towns. During Percival's time it was an eclectic gathering with civil law, medicine, general politics, commerce and the arts among its interests. In its early years it was mainly supported by doctors and thus in effect served the purposes of a provincial medical society.[60]

Connected to the Literary and Philosophical Society was another public institution conceived and founded by Percival and his circle. This was the short-lived College of Arts and Sciences, which was designed to provide a 'liberal and systematic' education for youths destined for a career in business.[61] Percival's life-long involvement with local education also included his efforts, after the close of Warrington, to create a new collegiate institution, Manchester Academy, founded in 1786 for the education of Dissenting ministers. This venture was part of a movement which eventually

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culminated in the Owens College and the University of Manchester.[62]

Along with his role in the formation of the institutions listed above, Percival was also an active participant in two famous contemporary political issues, the Manchester presentation to Parliament of a petition for the abolition of slavery and an application for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. As Edward Percival noted, these concerns were not unrelated as both relied on natural-law arguments drawn from the theories imbibed by the key reformers at Scottish universities and Dissenting academies.[63] Percival corresponded with William Robertson and James Beattie on the slavery issue and persuaded them to send copies of their sermons and essays on the subject to William Wilberforce.[64] These close connections between the Scottish and Dissenting abolitionists and between both these groups and similar ones on the Continent and in America are typical of the breadth and liveliness of the intellectual world in which Percival and his group pursued their profession and exchanged their ideas.

Percival's Medical Career

Like John Gregory, Percival took as his chief intellectual guide and mentor the man he called 'the brightest luminary of science', Francis Bacon. Like Gregory, too, Percival's career can be seen as an attempt to promote the ideals of Bacon's experimental science and to put into practice his proposals for the advancement of medicine. Soon after settling in Manchester, Percival published the first volume of his *Essays, Medical and Experimental*, which was designed to celebrate, promote and illustrate the rules of experimental philosophy.[65] Early in his career he declared that:

> the great Lord Verulam recommends the collecting of facts, observations, and experiments, as the best method of promoting the improvement of physic; and experience hath fully evinced the utility of such a plan. In this way I am ambitious of contributing my mite to the general stock of knowledge; and shall think myself happy, if I can thus render the pursuit of my own instruction and amusement subservient to the interests of my profession, and to the general good of mankind.[66]

Elegant and erudite, Percival's medical essays demonstrate his commitment to Bacon's 'great common world of science' which he contrasted with the closed world of past systematizers and theorists.[67] Like Gregory, Percival celebrated the co-operative and international nature of Baconian science and declared his allegiance

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to a new rational medicine based on the 'analytic-synthetic' method. He believed with Bacon that the best physicians combine the virtues of the dogmatic and empiric or, as Bacon explained, 'being learned incline to the traditions of experience, or being empirics, incline to the methods of learning'.[68]

Many of Percival's medical and experimental essays are attempts to deploy medical science in the battle to improve public health. In one essay he reported the outcome of experiments he and Joseph Priestley had done on 'the medicinal uses of fixed air'; in another he compared observations with Benjamin Franklin on 'the different quantities of rain which fell at different heights over the same spot of ground'. His most successful practical experiment was a series of clinical trials at the Manchester Infirmary to determine the medicinal properties of cod-liver oil. He was one of the first physicians to recommend it as a cure for rickets and is said to have successfully masked its notorious foul taste by suspending it in a solution of liquid soap.[69]

Percival's essays on medically related topics were initially read to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society and to the Royal Societies of London and Edinburgh. Many were later published in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society and in various journals designed for lay readers.[70] His essays were also published in America and translated into French and German. Again it should be noted that Percival's medical writings were promptly and efficiently disseminated by the network of liberal Dissenters, most of whom were in London, by booksellers and publishers, such as Joseph Johnson, and by the group of Dissenting literati, such as the younger John Aikin, who controlled and sustained the leading four or five reviews and magazines in Britain.[71]

If the primary goal of Percival's medical essays was, as his biographer confirms, to spread the Baconian gospel, they were very successful indeed. His scholarly association with several of the most famous men of science in Britain, America and France helped to connect in the public mind the exciting new developments in experimental science with the far less glamorous sphere of practical medicine. Percival was a propagandist for the new science and a skilful medical pedagogue. His devotion to the Baconian ideal and his capacity for attracting a wide audience were therefore arguably as important to the development of medical science and its culture as the successful experiments of more philosophically astute scientists. His real talents did not lie in the field of experimental science as such. This was evident even to his biographer-son who ruefully

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